UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
16th meeting
held on
Thursday, 26 October 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/50/SR.16
15 November 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

95-81801 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 1.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/126-E/1995/20, A/50/126/Add.1-E/1995/20/Add.1, A/50/142, A/50/175-E/1995/57, A/50/180-E/1995/63, A/50/213-E/1995/87 and A/50/262-E/1995/69; A/C.2/50/L.3 and A/C.2/50/L.4)

1. Mr. SOBHAN (Bangladesh), speaking on the development of Africa, the theme of the recent high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, said that one of the priorities of the international community was the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. With respect to the latter, the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review had made recommendations on trade, external finance and debt which needed to be urgently implemented. Given that during the previous year 95 per cent of all direct investment had gone to a dozen or so developing countries, while 90 other countries had received only 1 per cent of that investment, Bangladesh believed that a more action-oriented approach was needed to greatly increase foreign direct investment in the least developed countries. To that end, efforts should be made, by offering appropriate fiscal incentives, to persuade transnational corporations to take advantage of the various facilities available in most of the least developed countries. As various organs of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as the World Bank, were each trying separately to encourage direct foreign investment in the developing countries, there was clearly a need for a coordinated and structured approach if optimal results were to be achieved.

2. The issue of safe water supply and sanitation was extremely important to Bangladesh. It was important to understand that the objective of providing safe water and sanitation to the millions of people throughout the world who lacked them could only be achieved by eradicating poverty. The recommendations contained in chapter 18 of Agenda 21 and those agreed on at the second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development must be urgently implemented. In order to prevent a water supply crisis, adequate financial resources must be mobilized, using all available mechanisms. The recurrent floods from which Bangladesh suffered made it difficult to supply drinking water, while in recent years the water shortage in the northern region of the country meant that underground water levels had gone down. For Bangladesh, therefore, regional and international cooperation in that area was vital.

3. An issue which deserved special attention was the follow-up to major international conferences in which the concept of development was the common link. It was important to have a framework for a global partnership of development, within which the follow-up could be coordinated at the intergovernmental, inter-agency and country levels. At the country level, inclusion in development plans of priority action recommended by conferences must be the direct responsibility of the Government of each country. At the inter-agency level, the Economic and Social Council could identify crucial issues that required regular policy reviews in the Second and Third Committees

of the General Assembly. The United Nations system could play an effective role in reviewing progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the conferences. Functional commissions and regional commissions should also play a more proactive role in that respect, and the Economic and Social Council could enhance coordination with them and among them. Greater cooperation and coordination between the Council, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination were essential for system-wide coordination. At the international level, Bangladesh had already proposed that the G7 leaders should meet the heads of State and heads of Government of the least developed countries to review the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development and the decisions adopted at the Rio Summit, the Beijing Conference and the Cairo Conference, with special emphasis on the eradication of poverty.

4. Bangladesh believed that better coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was vital in the follow-up to the major international conferences and other agreements and commitments contained in internationally negotiated instruments. The relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should be viewed in terms of the democratization of the decision-making system and achieving greater transparency in those institutions. The same was true for the World Trade Organization. Bangladesh urged those institutions to take far-reaching measures to expand investment in the social sectors of the developing countries.

5. Bangladesh believed that, given the greater complexity of the pressing problems of development, the coordinating authority of the Council needed to be enhanced. The discussions of the open-ended ad hoc working group on an agenda for development and the recently established working group on the strengthening of the United Nations system would strengthen the role of the Council, but the successful conclusion of the process of reform and adjustment would require the political will of all those present, and particularly of their partners in development.

6. Mr. KIM (Republic of Korea) said that although the experiences of the past four years showed that the true potential of the high-level segments of the Economic and Social Council had not yet been fully realized, the theme selected for that segment at the substantive session of 1995 had been timely and appropriate. Various proposals had been made to help resolve the problems of development in Africa, which tested international cooperation for development and the ability of the United Nations, and in particular of the Economic and Social Council, to promote it. His delegation congratulated the Bureau of the Council for arranging in that context two informal discussions on the high-level theme and the revitalization of the Council.

7. In the preceding six years, six major conferences had been held to meet the challenges posed by many economic and social issues. It was therefore timely that the Economic and Social Council had discussed a coordinated follow-up of the results of those conferences. Korea supported the conclusions it had reached, in particular that it should review the themes common to the major conferences and the implementation of the programmes of action arising out of them. It should also ensure the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of subsidiary bodies, including the functional commissions,

by promoting a clear division of labour among those bodies and providing clear policy guidelines for them. Korea believed that the Council should call periodic meetings of the officers of the subsidiary bodies and supported a recent proposal by the Secretary-General that the Council should review their mandates. Reporting was also important to ensure effective follow-up. The possibility of integrated reporting should be explored, and reports should be concise, clearly indicating the issues and possible actions and their implications.

8. Mr. RASHKAJIEV (Bulgaria) said he shared the view that the Economic and Social Council should enhance its capacity to provide policy guidance, take decisions and react promptly to critical developments in the economic, social and developmental fields. Streamlining its activities in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in particular resolution 48/162, was of special importance.

9. Bulgaria expressed its satisfaction that during the substantive session in 1995, a central theme of the high-level meetings had been the development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. That was a priority issue requiring international solidarity.

10. Bulgaria supported efforts under way to enhance interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions. It deemed especially important the high-level policy dialogue in which the executive heads of the major multilateral financial and trade institutions had participated for the first time. Bulgaria shared the view that the organizational model of those policy dialogues should be improved to make them more result-oriented.

11. Concerning follow-up of the results of the major international conferences, Bulgaria shared the opinion that the Economic and Social Council should promote a coordinated, integrated approach. It also felt that the conference follow-up theme to be considered at the coordination segment should be chosen at the previous substantive session of the Council in order to allow for adequate preparation by the functional commissions, other relevant intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat. In the follow-up to United Nations conferences, the Council should ensure the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by promoting a clearer division of labour among them and by providing clear policy guidance to them. The Council should also ensure the coherent implementation of recommendations emanating from recent major United Nations conferences. Compiling those recommendations, arranging them by order of importance and at least proposing national schedules for putting them into effect should proceed promptly. Agenda 21 could provide a common framework, complemented by the programmes of action produced by the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the recommendations of the World Conference on Women and the results of the upcoming Habitat II. No more United Nations conferences should be planned until the results of the recent conferences had been studied and applied.

12. The operational activities segment should be aimed at providing coordination and guidance in order to improve the overall quality and

effectiveness of the system and to promote an integrated approach. The policies formulated by the General Assembly, particularly during the triennial policy review, should be implemented on a system-wide basis. Bulgaria commended the organization of the general segment, which had recognized the distinction between economic and social issues and had supported streamlining the work and strengthening the role of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. It agreed that the mandates, composition and working methods of the functional commissions should be further reviewed, as appropriate, to enable them to achieve greater coherence and mutual reinforcement.

13. Mr. SINGH (India) stated that his delegation endorsed the recommendations on substantive aspects made in the report of the Economic and Social Council. It felt, however, that more should have been done to put into place an effective and revitalized mechanism and programme of work for follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. Clearly the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council needed to play a more relevant and effective role in the multilateral economic dialogue. On the basis of discussions at the substantive session in Geneva, some areas for further improvement suggested themselves: follow-up to the high-level segment debate must be made more effective, and the President's summary must lead to an agreed conclusion and declaration or resolution. In the general segment, overclustering of items had hindered debate on specific issues. The recommendations of subsidiary bodies that needed specific endorsement and approval by the Council had not been clearly spelt out. The Committee should study the possibility of publishing an executive document listing recommendations from the various subsidiary bodies which required specific endorsement.

14. India believed that the Economic and Social Council could contribute to promoting coordination within the United Nations system by acting as a forum for its various bodies, funds and agencies. In order to do so the Council would have to follow more closely discussions in the regional commissions, UNIDO, UNESCO, FAO, WHO, ILO and other bodies.

15. India also believed that suggestions for improving the work of the Council should be pursued in the context of follow-up to resolution 48/162. It would certainly be prepared to work with others in enhancing the Council's work and impact, but the objectives should be clear: making the Council and the United Nations more effective, strengthening the participation of the developing countries in the international decision-making process and increasing intergovernmental oversight of the workings of the Secretariat.

16. Mr. DUGAN (United States of America) said that he would only comment briefly on the item under consideration, since the General assembly would soon take up agenda item 23 (Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields). The plenary meetings of the General Assembly were the most appropriate forum for the in-depth discussion of issues related to the Economic and Social Council and, in particular, to the implementation of the further measures set out in resolution 48/162.

17. The July session of the Economic and Social Council had been satisfactory. In previous years, the practice had been to devote one month (May) to social issues and another month (July) to economic issues, whereas at the latest

session both sets of issues had been discussed in a single month. Another sign of improvement in the Council's methods of work was the fact that the debate on the issue under discussion had taken only one day instead of the usual two or three. That had been made possible by the Council's willingness to trust in the efficiency and competence of its subsidiary organs and to adopt their conclusions without re-examining the same issues. The United States supported that system and all other efforts to improve working methods still further, and agreed with the European Union that the key to enhancing the Council's effectiveness was to streamline procedures in order to avoid duplication of effort and other problems. During the high-level segment of the session, important statements had been made by the executive heads of the international financial institutions and, for the first time, by the Director-General of the World Trade Organization. The meetings on operational activities had also exemplified the useful reforms introduced by the Council, in that the heads of various funds and programmes had participated fully in the meetings and had answered questions raised by delegations. The United States applauded the enormous effort made by the national representatives during the coordination segment, and supported the results thereof. It also awaited with interest the full implementation of the outcome of the world conferences and the follow-up thereto. The biennial presentation of reports by subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council at the general segment seemed to be working well. It would be useful for those subsidiary organs or the higher level organs to be represented at the meetings so that they could speak to the Member States, which were their "shareholders", so to speak, and present their reports to them directly.

18. Mr. OJIMBA (Nigeria), after endorsing the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, in the context of the reform and restructuring of United Nations bodies, it was urgent to examine the relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with a view to strengthening the Council's role. In that connection, the final outcome of the high-level segment of the substantive session held in Geneva in July 1995 on the item "Development of Africa, including the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", had been very disappointing. In the report under consideration (A/50/3), the chapter on the high-level segment of the session merely lamented Africa's socio-economic development problems, and did not include any decisions or recommendations that could guide the General Assembly's further deliberations on the implementation of the New Agenda at its fiftieth session.

19. In the spirit of General Assembly resolution 48/162, Nigeria wished to seize the historic occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations to call for a vigorous effort to strengthen the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, including he Economic and Social Council.

20. Mr. KAMANDO (United Republic of Tanzania), after associating himself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his country was one of the develcping countries seriously affected by malaria, which took a heavy toll in terms of human life and suffering, particularly among infants and young children, schoolchildren, and men and women of working age, thereby contributing to the vicious circle of

disease, malnutrition and poverty. The United Republic of Tanzania was taking appropriate steps to implement the Global Malaria Control Strategy by formulating action programmes aimed at preventing and controlling the disease. However, those programmes could not be effective unless countries such as his own received the assistance they needed in the area of capacity-building, particularly in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as appropriate technology for combating malaria. That called for increased cooperation in scientific research and the transfer of technology.

21. With respect to the 1995 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, his delegation supported the views expressed by the representative of Spain, on behalf of the European Union, regarding the outcome of the high-level segment, which had focused that year on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. His delegation had expected the Council to follow up its consideration of that important policy question with specific recommendations to the General Assembly that would serve as guidelines for the preparation of the mid-term review scheduled for the following year, but that had not occurred. Like other delegations which had referred to the issue, his delegation felt that, in recognition of the high-level segment role, its conclusions should be given more weight.

22. Mr. BELHIMEUR (Algeria) supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. With regard to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on communication for development programmes in the United Nations system (A/50/126), he said that communication was essential to the success of any kind of activity and, in the current context of increasingly keen competition for markets, had become an indispensable tool for any administrator concerned about the future of his or her enterprise.

23. The Organization's mandates in the service of humanity were as diverse as they were important. It was therefore appropriate to ask what the target populations or States thought of those mandates. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit noted that, thus far, the issue had not received the attention it deserved. Algeria felt that a bolder, more imaginative or better organized communication strategy would have helped to prevent many misconceptions about the work of the United Nations and would have promoted a better understanding of its activities in areas such as development, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid.

24. The value of the JIU report lay in the fact that it put forward a number of recommendations to correct that situation and to give communication a suitably important role in all of the Organization's activities and initiatives. Better use of that vital component would also help to promote a freer-flowing dialogue with the peoples and Governments that benefited from United Nations activities and programmes. Moreover, better communication would help to improve the Organization's public image in donor countries, which were increasingly doubtful about the usefulness of the United Nations. It had already been recognized that the measures recommended in the report were well founded and that communication must be integrated into the operational strategies of the United Nations system. What remained to be considered was their viability.

25. Mr. AGGNA (Uganda) agreed with the general view that more weight should be given to the conclusions of the high-level segment of the 1995 substantive

session of the Economic and Social Council, which had focused on the development of Africa and the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The discussions at the high-level segment and the President's summary thereof would be very useful for following up on the issue. In that connection, he hoped that the participants in the current session would reach concrete decisions with a view to providing the legislative basis for action on the recommendations contained in that summary.

26. With respect to the report presented by the representative of WHO, his Government attached great importance to the fight against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, especially cholera, and agreed with the report's recommendations calling for global commitment to the mobilization of resources for that purpose, the development of national strategies and plans for controlling those diseases, and extensive manpower training, especially for public health personnel. The implementation of the global AIDS strategy was also extremely important, since the rapid spread of the disease threatened to have catastrophic economic and social consequences. The international community must therefore keep track of those developments and redouble its efforts in that area.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m